RESTORATION REVIEW

The New Humanity . . .

THE NEW MORALITY

It is a mistake to think of Jesus *having* an ethic, or to conceive of Christianity as a moral philosophy. Any rules or principles gleaned from Christian teaching are not likely to be substantially different from any of the great moral systems, including the ethical imperatives of the prophets of Israel. Jesus did not come to introduce a new ethical system. He laid down no rules that would differ radically from what other great teachers of Israel had already said. Jesus did not come to enrich life by means of a new ethic, for he came to give life itself.

This is what we mean by the new morality: *it is life in the Son.* The moral standard is the Christ himself. He is the way, the truth, and the light. We are not made righteous by following any rules he laid down, nor do we achieve any moral goodness by obeying his commands. He is our righteousness, and it is only as we are in him that we can lay any claim to purity. Moral worth is imputed to us only by God's grace through Christ, not by rule-keeping on our part. He does not provide us with a pattern for goodness. He is that pattern and that goodness. Our own goodness, as the prophet says, is as filthy rags, and it matters not what moral rules we may use in trying to be good, those of the New Covenant scriptures or those of Confucius.

The apostle points to the new morality when he writes in Col. 2:

"Since Jesus was delivered to you as Christ and Lord, live your lives in union with him. Be rooted in him; be built in him; be consolidated in the faith you were taught."

There is a big difference between being *rooted in rules,* even Jesus' rules, and "rooted in him." Living in union with Christ is to live the abundant life. And it is the new morality, one based on the life that is life indeed. So the new morality is part and parcel of the new humanity. Being a Christian *adds* nothing to life. It is life itself. It does not enrich one's morals. It is the new morality itself. Jesus gives us no philosophy that makes life less difficult. He gave us himself. He is the pattern and that pattern is the new ethic.

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Paul says more about the new morality in Col. 3:

"You died and now your life *lies* hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory."

Christ is our life! Never in all history could a sage, prophet, or moral philosopher point to such a frame of reference. *Your life lies hidden with Christ in God!* is a morality that could not be realized even by the prophets of Israel, who were the greatest moralists of history.

But Peter, a man in Christ, realized the meaning of this new life, for he wrote: “So come to him, our living Stone—the stone rejected by men but choice and precious in the sight of God. Come, and let yourselves be built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple” (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

The great moral systems have not lacked for principles. It is the *Person*, that Peter had, that they lacked. The Stoics pointed to self-discipline, while Aristotle pointed to self-realization. Socrates and Plato insisted that knowledge is virtue and that through understanding the moral *life* can be achieved. Buddhism, which has the highest morality of the Eastern religions, looks to suffering and self-abnegation as the basis of goodness.

But all these are but humanistic systems, which means they are limited to human ingenuity and power for their strength. To trust in them is like trusting in a broken tooth, and to rely on them is but to rely on one’s own powers.

The prophets of the Old Covenant were different in that their moral directives were of God and they looked to God for the strength to appropriate them. *Psalms* 1 is a good example of this, for it is a moral proverb as well as a song; it is an ethic as well as poetry. The man who avoids evil and makes the law of the Lord his delight shall prosper like a fruitful tree. The Lord shall make it so.

Moral teaching reached its apex in prophets like Isaiah, Amos, and Micah. They cried out for social justice: “Cease to do evil and learn to do right, pursue justice and champion the oppressed: give the orphan his rights, plead the widow’s cause” (Isa. 1:18). They taught that justice is love distributed: “God has told you what is good; and what is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly, to love loyally, to walk wisely before your God” (Micah 6:8). They condemned the life of ease and the comfortable conscience: “You who loll on beds inlaid with ivory and sprawl over your couches, feasting on lambs from the flock and fatted calves, you who pluck the strings of the lute and invent musical instruments like David, you who drink wine by the bowlful and lard yourselves with the richest of oils, but are not grieved at the ruin of Joseph” (Amos 6).

One could not expect to find a higher, more relevant, and more practical ethic anywhere. And if it is principles one is looking for, whether in terms of the brotherhood of man or the fatherhood of God, they are richly infused in Old Testament literature.

The new morality, of course, has all of this and far more, for it shows us the difference Christ makes. The one thing that the prophets could not give to Israel is what God has given to us: *life in the Son.* The new humanity is the new life in Christ.

And what a difference it made in Paul’s moral thinking! What prophet, not to mention the philosophers, could say as Paul did: “The life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20).

Moral issues center in a man's relationship with his fellows. The way a man treats his neighbor depends largely on his beliefs and values. William James, the Harvard psychologist-philosopher, contended that a land-lady should know more about a prospective tenant than his financial condition. She should know his views on the universe! The same could be said for the girl who is considering marriage. Her suitor's sense of values may be more important than his ability to make a living.

When this approach is taken in reference to Paul and some of his problems with the congregations, the new morality shines in all its beauty. On the matter of eating meats he says: "Do not by your eating bring disaster to a man for whom Christ died!" In Christ a man sees another as his brother, as one for whom Christ died. This is the new morality. A brother is not a liberal or a conservative, strong or weak, or even right or wrong. He is one for whom Christ died. How many of our problems would that one solve!

Paul talks the same way in 1 Cor. 8: "This 'knowledge' of yours is utter disaster to the weak, the brother for whom Christ died. In thus sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience, you sin against Christ." Paul goes on to show the real import of brotherhood: "If food be the downfall of my brother, I will never eat meat any more, for I will not be the cause of my brother's downfall."

What a morality this is! *The brother for whom Christ died.* Actually there are no moral rules here. It is rather the expression of life itself, life in Christ. Since a man has the same relationship with Christ that I have, I am to forego all personal consideration for his peace and security.

In the new morality men are not black and white, rich and poor, influential and uninfluential. They are the new humanity. They are men for whom Christ died. This transcends the best of all ethical systems, for it causes men to act, not so much out of rules, but out of brotherhood.—*the Editor*

Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be.—*William Hazlitt*

If it is dangerous to entertain great moral ideals without attempting to realize them in life, it is even more perilous to proclaim them in abstract terms without bringing them into juxtaposition with the specific social and moral issues of the day.—*Rheinhold Niebuhr*

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A LIFE OF WORK

The other evening at dinner Ouida was observing how our lives together is a world of almost incessant work. She wasn't complaining, but was rather recalling something she had read about Pat Nixon, how the First Lady and the President did not have and did not need much of a social life since they were so dedicated to the tasks at hand. Ouida and I must be like a lot of our readers, as well as the President and his wife, in that we keep too busy with our responsibilities to find much time for things out on the periphery. We concluded that this is probably a good thing, that we are healthier in both mind and body in that we keep as busy as bees.

But Ouida's observation set me to thinking about how being busy is related to being spiritual. Surely one may be as busy as a beaver without being spiritual, but it is not likely true the other way around, for spirituality is dependent on a measure of activity and aggressiveness. Just how these may relate makes for an interesting question. I can see how a busy carpenter or plumber is so engrossed in his work that he may go for hours without a single so-called "spiritual thought." We would suppose that in the daily business of any disciple of Jesus there would be those flashes of thought upon God's goodness or perhaps a hurried prayer, but one would hardly expect an airline pilot to be meditating on a prophecy of Isaiah while landing a giant jet at Love Field, nor would we suppose that a brain surgeon is thinking about the Incarnation while performing a delicate operation. And it may not be proper for the haggard mother to chastise herself for "going all day without thinking about God."

This may mean that every working day should have coffee-breaks that are devotional. A telephone operator is simply too busy to think about things more important than putting calls through, but as a Christian she may turn her short breaks into moments for recharging her batteries, so that she might be aglow with the Spirit the rest of the day. The busy disciple learns to take advantage of his marginal moments. It may be by means of a pocket *Testament,* articles crammed into a purse awaiting for just such a time to be read, or a quiet talk with a fellow-worker about the Lord.

Ouida's comment led me to think also about the busy life of our Lord. Being human as he was (and what a neglected truth this is, that Jesus was indeed *man),* I suppose that when he fished he thought about fish, and when he made merry at a wedding feast, with wine in hand, he was caught up in the joy of the occasion like other folk. I do not see Jesus as monastic, hidden from the ongoing of life and sheltered by endless prayer and meditation. If Jesus could have seen the Olympics in his time or a modern football game, I suppose he would soon have been engrossed in the drama transpiring before him. Our Lord was no monk, but rather a worldly man in the highest sense of that term. And by that I mean that he so loved the world that he entered into its history and gave his life in order to change that history.

Jesus may well have been a busier man than most of us can imagine. After all, he was busy changing the world by changing people. People can be tiring and boring. Our Lord, being God as well as man, never seemed to have been bored with anyone. He never left the impression with people that he was in a hurry or that he did not want to be bothered. His time was theirs, and his resources were at their disposal. But he did grow tired and weary, and he too sought out those opportunities to steal away to a quiet place where he could be alone with God.

John 9:4 tells us something important about how Jesus viewed his life: "We must keep on doing the works of him who sent me, as long as it is day; the night is coming, when no one can work." There is a sense of urgency here. Our Lord came into this world to work, and he wanted to keep at it. But the next line is equally informative: "While I am in the world I am the light for the world." That phrase in the world is weighty. He was in the world and he was at work. This is the Christian's pattern for action in our time. We too are to be in the world and we are to be at work. We should seek out the quiet moments, as our Lord did, so that we might be with God; but we must realize too that the work itself can be a spiritual experience.

I recall the old Texas farmer, a dedicated disciple, who was so tired after toiling in the field all day that he would fall asleep while leading the family devotional. We are slow to see that work in the field is as spiritual (or *can* be) as conducting vespers. If one's life is within the will of God, his place behind the wheel of a truck is as sacred as any pulpit, and cleaning a latrine may be as much to the glory of God as a season of prayer.

My point is that if there are any *sacraments* work is as much one as is marriage, "sacrament" supposedly referring to those avenues through which God bestows his grace. In our day when men's minds are preoccupied with the security of pensions, trust funds, retirement, and all sorts of fringe benefits, along with the notion that the less one works the better, we need to restore the concept of the sanctity and dignity of honest labor. Work is of God, who Himself worked six days before He rested.

The divines who gave us the notion of "the seven deadly sins" may have wisely included slothfulness as among the number. In meandering through *Proverbs* one is soon convinced that it is work rather than cleanliness that is next to godliness. "Idleness lulls a man to sleep," one reads, and he is urged "to go to the ant, you sloth, consider her ways and be wise." One theme of *Proverbs* is reflected in 21:25: "The idler's desires are the death of him, since his hands will do no work."

The great sages have all extolled the virtue of work, which for some reason seems to be slipping from us in our carefree world. The man who prefers a welfare check to an honest day's work is of no disposition to appreciate Joseph Conrad's view that "A man is a worker. If he is not that he is nothing." John Burroughs insists that the promoter of health and happiness is *something to do.* Happiness comes, he points out, not by seeking it, but

by losing oneself in worthwhile tasks. “Blessed is the man who has some congenial work,” he says, “some occupation in which he can put his heart, and which affords a complete outlet to all the forces there are in him.” We would expect Socrates to say it philosophically: “A man should inure himself to voluntary labor, and not give up to indulgence and pleasure, as they beget no good constitution of body nor knowledge of mind.”

Teddy Roosevelt’s wisdom seems especially appropriate in these days when hard work is viewed more of a vice than a virtue: “I don’t pity any man who does hard work worth doing. I admire him. I pity the creature who doesn’t work, at whichever end of the social scale he may regard himself as being.”

In my boyhood days I recall that anyone who had to “work like a nigger” really had it rough. It was often a cry of woe, having to work like a black man, some job fit only for a slave. The Christian response to that has to be that if it is honorable and worthwhile it is appropriate for any man. Any Christian will be pleased to “work like a nigger” once he sees it as God’s will for him. Something is wrong when an able-bodied man sees himself as *above* menial tasks. We know that Jesus chose to wash men’s feet, and we can suppose he would volunteer to do any humble task, whether cleaning fish or emptying bedpans. Paul is urging us to be like Jesus when he writes: “Never be condescending but make real friends with the poor” (Rom. 12:16).

The professional ministry, something that has happened in the institutional church that God probably never intended, usually denies a man the blessing of “suffering hardship” by supporting his efforts in the gospel by working with his own hands. Not that the hired preacher is not a busy man, but it hardly makes for the kind of situation Paul describes to the Ephesian elders: “You yourselves know that with these hands of mine I have worked and provided everything that my companions and I have needed” (Acts 20:34).

The dignity of labor blends gloriously with the ministry of the word. We all admire the man who supports himself in the preaching of the gospel. The apostles left an example in this regard that is too seldom followed: “Surely you remember, brothers, how we worked and toiled! We worked day and night so we would not be any trouble to you as we preached to you the Good News from God” (1 Thess. 2:9). To the Corinthians Paul speaks of the apostles not only as fools for Christ’s sake but also as men who “work hard to support ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:12). Elsewhere in listing his hardships Paul says: “There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing” (2 Cor. 11:27).

The modern minister’s situation is too much in contrast to such a picture, for he hardly knows what it is to put in a hard day’s work at the factory. The neophyte, fresh out of college or seminary, has learned to expect a life of relative ease: reading and study, calling on folk, office hours, counseling, pulpit activity. Not that such things are not *work,* but it is a kind of activity that sets a man apart from the working man. It is noteworthy that the

apostle Paul, while defending his right to be supported, chose to work with his own hands. It says as much for the glory of work in the Christian's life as it does for the attitude one should have toward the ministry.

It makes an interesting question as to how we would be faring if no one ever received a dollar for preaching the gospel, if all gospel workers in some way supported themselves. Would our divisions be more serious or less serious? Would we be more concerned or less concerned for huge plants and real estate holdings? Would more or less of our money get to the poor—which, by the way, is the only reason the early Christians ever raised any money? It may not be going too far to say that the modern pastor system depends on, thrives on, and is preserved by *money.* It certainly was not the example of Paul that brought it into existence. It would be both unfair and untrue to charge that preachers ply their trade for the money that is in it, and yet they are to some measure vulnerable to the criticism in that they do make their living from the ministry. Certain things are expected of the professional preacher, whether visiting the hospital or tossing out pious platitudes; and the response is "Well, after all, that's what he's paid for."

We are saying that even our concept of ministry might change should we restore to our outlook the glory and dignity of work. If a brother does take on some position that tends to set him apart, such as being a hired minister, maybe he should also, as time would allow, be the church janitor. Cleaning commodes and washing windows would reduce the distance between himself and the working man. He should be the first to volunteer for the menial tasks, doing all he can to show that he does not consider himself above such. Or he could search out those in his congregation that have the most undesirable ways of making a living, and make it a point to lend them a helping hand from time to time. It would do any professional minister a lot of good to be on a milk truck at 5 a.m. occasionally, or perhaps joining the clean-up crew in an office building after hours. However he does it, the minister needs to stay close to the common man and his work, for whether he likes it or not he is part of a long and ugly history that has set priestcraft apart from the rank and file of believers.

Plain, old-fashioned hard work is at the heart of our Christian profession. When the Thessalonians began to lose sight of this truth, Paul enjoined that if a man does not work neither is he to eat. The principle is also economically sound. Each man is obligated to work and take care of himself and the family that he has brought into the world. The Bible bills the man who has not learned this simple lesson as "worse than an infidel." Considering the welfare checks issued by our government, there must be within our nation, if not within our brotherhood, many who are worse than infidels.

This is the force of Paul's instructions to Titus that "Those who have come to believe in God should see that they engage in honourable occupations, which are not only honourable in themselves, but also useful to their fellow-men." Again he says to Titus:

"Our own people must be taught to engage in honest employment to produce the necessities of life; they must not be unproductive."

This is at the heart of the glory of work, that it is useful, that it satisfies the necessities of life, both for oneself and others. Those engaged in the manufacture and sale of cigarettes may have a problem here, as would those who follow high-pressure techniques to sell a set of books to a family that can hardly read and whose cupboard is bare.

When one labors in a useful task to gain the wherewith to help a brother in need, he has earned the means of a great blessing: *being able to give something of himself, the fruit of his own labor.* A nation becomes less Christian when its government follows interventionist policies that discourage individual charity. It was once to a man's credit when he could work a little harder so as to be able to help his aging parents. It was good for folk to tighten their belts somewhat so as to help some neighbor with his hospital bill Those days seem to be disappearing, for now Uncle Sam is taking care of everybody and everything. And along with it something is happening to the Christian concept of work.—*the Editor*

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REPORT ON UNITY FORUM IN LUBBOCK

The Fifth Annual Unity Forum was held in Lubbock on the campus of Lubbock Christian College, July 2-4. It takes its place in our ecumenical history alongside Bethany, Milligan, Southeastern, and West Islip, the previous places where the forum has been conducted. It now appears that the Sixth Annual Unity Forum will be either in Atlanta or Terra Haute, Indiana. Definite announcement will come before the end of this year.

The Lubbock affair, like the previous ones, had its own peculiar significance. The first of these is that it was sponsored by a dynamic committee of non-class brethren, consisting of Thomas Langford, Kline Nall, Wendell Huddleston, and Don Conard. These are all talented men, having contacts in educational and civic affairs that enabled them to put together the most exciting program that the forum has had thus far. It is encouraging that our non-Sunday School people would accept this kind of responsibility and manifest such an interest in the cause of unity.

Equally significant is the fact that the forum was held on the campus of a main-line Church of Christ college. F. W. Mattox, president of Lubbock Christian, is an unusually fine man and a dedicated Christian. He was helpful to the unity effort, not only in giving the welcoming address, but also by his attendance at the sessions and his participation in the discussions. At the closing session he made helpful suggestions as to how the annual forum might be improved and made more acceptable to the rank and file of brethren, one being that "we must get down to the real things that divide us." He also pointed out that

the forum seems to imply that love is the only basis for unity, that we must make it clear that there is more to it than that. He also warned us against "running past Jerusalem" and of the possible danger of giving comfort to those not in Christ.

While the college did not sponsor the meeting nor give official sanction to it, it was considered a kind of breakthrough that one of these forums, which have been vehemently opposed by many of our leaders since their inception, could be held on the campus of one of our colleges. Some thought this the most significant aspect of this particular effort.

Hardly any facet of the forum, however, could be more significant than the high quality of the participants, especially in view of the diverse backgrounds represented. From the Disciples we had no less than Perry Gresham, president of Bethany College, who inspired the forum with his account of our pioneers and their ideas; and Dudley Strain, minister of the First Christian Church in Lubbock, who is state secretary for the Disciples, and who pointed to ways in which barriers to unity can be overcome.

We were unusually blessed with talent from main-line Churches of Christ in that Wesley Reagan, Roy Osborne, and J. W. Roberts all made important contributions. Wes stressed the centrality of Christ in our struggle for oneness, while Roy gave a personal testimony in which he underscored the *urgency* of unity. J. W. served on a panel in which he called for a measure of doctrinal agreement. In an exchange with Dudley Strain he made clear his view that instrumental music stood as a barrier to fellowship with Christian Church brethren.

From the Independent Christian Churches came A. Dale Crain, who has one of the most seminal minds I know anywhere, and who by nature has to be a kind of gadfly wherever he happens to be. And he always manages to extend his stinger at these unity meetings, to the delight of people who enjoy seeing balloons punctured. Also from the Independents was Grayson Ensign, of the Amarillo College Bible Chair, who pointed to hate and competition among preachers as a common source of division.

The non-class folk, who sponsored the forum, had on hand G. B. Shelburne, Jr., who is both an editor and educator in their ranks; and Portis Ribble of San Angelo School of Evangelism. G. B. is a magnificent person who has no difficulty in being impressive. He admitted his previous misgivings about such gatherings, and his testimony as to what the Lubbock affair had meant to him was tremendously encouraging to all of us. He saw significance in the fact that we got together, if nothing else, something that we have too long neglected. Portis Ribble related our search for oneness to the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of unity.

LaVern Houtz, recent president of Southeastern Christian College, was present from the premillennial Churches of Christ, and he is one who always makes a contribution by the fine Christian spirit he shows. He contended in his remarks that we can have unity if we really want it, that we must look to the Christ for it rather than to our own creations.

My own presentation on the nature of unity appeared in this journal's June issue.

I was especially impressed that the non-class brethren made it a point to invite a leading brother from their own right wing, one who is one-cup as well as non-class. So J. Ervin Waters had the distinction of being farther left than anyone else, and with it he had the greatest opportunity to enjoy the fellowship of the saints with all those who disagreed with him, which was everybody! This he did magnificently. Ervin dresses like a river-boat gambler, looks like Rhet Butler, weeps like Jeremiah, and orates like a son of thunder. There is hardly a question but what he stole the show in Lubbock. His speech was a dramatic production that would stir the envy of any university speech department. He not only received a standing ovation for his presentation, but he so electrified those present that he virtually transformed a sedate forum into a dynamic love feast.

Ervin turned the rostrum into a confessional, pouring out his sorrow to the audience for the division and heartache that he himself had created as the leader of a faction. Being a man who is obviously both proud and able, his child-like call for repentance touched the hearts of us all. A lump formed in my throat when he cried to God that he would never again injure the body of Christ by debating with his brothers, and I wiped away a tear or two when he bemoaned the fact that he was "old too soon, wise too late."

Ouida made her way to him and commended him for his important contribution. "Then hug me," he said. What could she do but obey such a persuasive man? It was the one time in her life that she looked like Scarlet O'Hara! That anyone would request Ouida's embrace is understandable enough, but when Ervin wanted *me* to hug him too, I knew that he had found his own Damascus. It was a great moment.

You see, I knew Ervin Waters back when he would come to those early unity efforts in Dallas when Carl Ketcherside and I had lots of trouble getting people on the program. Like Peter of old, Ervin would bring his six brethren along (or was it sixteen?) to bear witness to his orthodoxy. He would make his speech and orate his arguments about cups and classes, and then hurry away with his brethren close behind, never staying around as an involved participant. It was a different Ervin Waters at Lubbock.

And it is fellows like Ervin Waters that are the best answer to the critics of our unity efforts. They are always after us to "talk about what divides us," which must mean that we are to keep on debating Herald of Truth and instrumental music, as if we have not had enough of that. The *real* issue is what has happened to Ervin and many others like him.

Ervin Waters will be no less preferential about his non-class, one-cup position, nor should he be. It only means that he has moved closer to Jesus and away from a party. It means he is going to love his brethren and enjoy Christian fellowship in spite of such differences. I strongly disagree with those who imply that men like Thomas Langford and Ervin Waters should debate the one-cup issue at these unity meetings, or that J. W. Roberts and Dudley Strain should debate instrumental music. Reasonable and brotherly exchanges

on any subject are, of course, always in order, but these should occur within the context of unity and fellowship, not as a condition to them. Ervin did not get the one-cup issue settled in Lubbock, nor will he ever to everybody's satisfaction, but he did get the issue of fellowship settled for himself. If we wait until the instrument question is settled before we experience oneness together in Christ, then unity will never be ours to enjoy.

This criticism indicates a failure to understand the nature of unity, for it implies that unity is based upon uniformity of viewpoint. Work out the differences and we'll be united, is the way the thinking goes, which always means that the differences are to be worked out according to the demands of a particular party. What we tried to get across at Lubbock is that the only kind of unity that is possible, and the only scriptural unity, is a unity in diversity. Anything else is but a demand for uniformity through conformity.

Ouida and I were edified by the trip to Lubbock. We went out a day early so that we could visit our strongholds "west of Antioch." We had a delightful visit with K. C. Moser at Lubbock Christian College, and we are convinced that he has an important contribution to make in future efforts of this kind. We attended chapel at Sunset School of Preaching and enjoyed helpful exchanges with several faculty people. One of the teachers assured me he would not walk across the street to one of our unity meetings (same old story: *we don't discuss the issues),* which left me with the impression that he has high standards indeed if he hasn't time to hear the likes of Wes Reagan, Roy Osborne, Perry Gresham, and Ervin Waters. Those who refuse to hear are, of course, the real losers, and they are the ones who should be there. We don't give up on them, for the Spirit of God has done mighty things with such ones before.

A visit to a special program for kids at First Christian took us full circle from right to left in brotherhood affairs in Lubbock. Ouida and I remarked to each other when the busy day was over, which ended in a non-class home with all sorts of brethren in a prayer circle, that it is wonderful to be free enough to enjoy *all* our brethren. From right to left, from the top of the circle to the bottom, they are all our brothers. We called on no half-brothers or cousins in Christ. We love them all and enjoyed them all, including the ones that frowned!

Tapes of forum are available. Write to Kline NaIl, Dept. of English, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.—*the Editor*

Doomed indeed is any land where opinions are put on trial and condemned as crimes, and where those who avow them are sacrificed, not to public safety, but to the hatred and savagery of their enemies.—*Spinoza*

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FREEDOM STATES ITS CASE

PAT BOONE

This is a letter from Pat Boone to a professor in a Church of Christ college, who published articles in the *Gospel Advocate* about Pat's recent experiences. We publish it with Pat's permission, believing that it will encourage many of our readers who, like Pat, are out on the growing edge of things and who sometimes feel lonely.—*Ed.*

I've been reading over the articles you felt it your "duty" to send to the *Gospel Advocate*, and I imagine to others. Brother, if I've learned anything from this lengthy correspondence and exchange of views with you, it is this: it is absolutely vital that each Christian find, cherish, and develop his own relationship with God that is free of undue majority pressure and unfettered by over-strong influence of other individuals. A man can't enjoy the liberty for which Christ died if he's afraid to study the Bible for himself and come to his own conclusions about worship and service.

If certain individual brethren, who affirm that they do *not* have any supernatural help, feel empowered to deny and denounce categorically the spiritual experiences of other Christians, then why should the average man waste time studying?

And more frightening, if these learned men can emphatically declare other dedicated searchers "deceived and deceiving," "false teachers," "unsound," and "definitely not led by God's Spirit"—based completely on their own superior intellectual grasp of the Scriptures—well then, the dedicated searcher would do well to put that dangerous Bible aside and just study the books and pronouncements of the learned men. It's the only "safe" thing to do!

Otherwise if he comes to his own conclusions, and worse still, if he dares to share these thoughts and conclusions with other average, ordinary Christians—he will most certainly find himself out of step with the majority, probably discredited and refused, labeled as "heretic," "wolf in sheep's clothing," "boring from within," "deceiver," "fallen from grace," and eventually disfellowshipped, at least by the learned men, and perhaps through their influence by the majority! You are infallibly sure that those "obvious points" are THE "sound doctrine" that all who see it another way can summarily be judged wrong, false, displeasing to God, led by false spirits, and fit to be disfellowshipped.

The first attitude is one of love, concern, brotherly kindness, longsuffering, which I believe we can have by the leading of the Spirit. But the second attitude is one of condemnation, self-righteousness, Pharisaical legalism. Under these conditions even God's Spirit cannot accomplish the unity referred to in Eph. 4.

I fear that the spirit of Diotrephes is abroad in the church today. This self-righteous fellow was so sure of his "preeminence" that he boldly refused to fellowship the beloved apostle John. John pictures Diotrephes as "prating against us with malicious words; and

not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

John's next words are "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good." In his first letter he gives some broad guidelines for fellowship and brotherhood. And John loved this man. Jesus demonstrated longsuffering, and yet he did not excuse error. He recognized man's imperfect and finite nature. The man with the mote in his eye, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the thief on the cross, the denial of Peter, and even doubting Thomas—all these show the compassion of Jesus.

Love, mercy, understanding, and compassion are God's gifts to us. None of them is deserved; they are all totally unmerited. Hasn't he given us these gifts so that we might demonstrate them to others? Jesus was perfect and so he knew exactly what constituted sin and what its appropriate punishment should be. We are not perfect, nor do we perfectly understand God's will. We are still looking through a glass darkly. We can't always know what constitutes sin or its just punishment. And still most of us are far less merciful, far less compassionate, and show far less understanding toward what we presume to be error than Jesus that most Christians see little point in trying to understand the Bible for themselves.

I am certain from my own study that the Lord will honor and guide the earnest seeker after truth, even if he has only average intelligence and background, limited time and little access to external scholarship. Jesus pictured us as lambs, sheep, and Himself as the Good Shepherd. I don't find any reference to the need for sheep-dogs, yapping and nipping at the legs of the sheep to keep them in the fold. Jesus says, "My sheep hear *my* voice." We are pictured as grazing in open pastures, not altogether or doing the same things at the same time; not regimented, but free to roam and explore and seek higher ground, yet always listening for the call of the Master's voice. And the sheep, when he hears the Shepherd say "Come," he obeys, whether the others do or not. He doesn't try to round up the others. He just obeys, and if the other have heard, so do they. They leave the worries of rounding up the "strays" to the Shepherd. There's beauty and freedom and love and trust in the Master in that picture.

Oh, I know and I am grateful, that we human sheep have been given the opportunity of trying to help our Shepherd round up strays and keep them in the fold. And I'm grateful for minds and scholarship and lives of study and contemplation, for they are helpful. But still Jesus says, "My sheep hear *my* voice." I get the distinct impression that He intends to keep on leading, culling out, rounding up, chastising and rewarding Himself! He's the head and we're the body, and only individual members at that. He will make the judgements and give the orders and evidence His divine concern or pleasure with our efforts. So my focus should be on Him, through my own study to know Him, and not so much on the bleating of the other sheep around me.

It's one thing to have strong, scholarly opinions, based on study and prayer, and to share them with others—and even to be concerned, vocally, when others seem to "miss the obvious point." But it's quite another thing to be so infallibly sure that we count others for naught, and this even with our pitiful mental equipment. We hammer away at our brothers anc judge and condemn them and their sincere beliefs as if we were infallible. Even if we were perfect like Jesus, he set a different example than the one we follow. No wonder he commanded. us to "Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Honestly, in your articles for the *Gospel Advocate* you sound like a spiritual Sherlock Holmes! You seem to be exposing the "strategy" of a couple of spies or dupes of the Devil who have set out to "sabotage the church." Your whole thesis is based upon a casual remark I made in the privacy of my home as to why we felt it unnecessary to make public statements about our beliefs. I explained that while we never dodged the issue, we avoided talking about it except when we were asked. This was our way of allowing the Spirit to lead, so that we would not be guilty of raising controversial issues on our own. We only sought to lift up Christ, and not simply be talking about our experiences in the Spirit or our own beliefs.

And so I hazarded the guess that since our brethren in the Church of Christ view the Holy Spirit as a controversial subject that it *might* be the leading of the Spirit for me to make some public statement in the light of our total experience, perhaps in book form, instead of in fragments by way of answering occasional questions.

This was all I said and it was given as a guess as to what the Spirit might do in this case. I did not say that we had received some "official pronouncement" or directive to "keep these things from the brethren," as you charged. That we weren't trying to keep anything from *anybody,* especially from the brethren, is evidenced by the fact that we were discussing these things freely with you!

(to be concluded)

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AUTHORITY OF SILENCE

By W. Carl Ketcherside

The first serious rift in the restoration movement of which most of us are heirs was blamed on the introduction of instrumental music. I say it was blamed on it because I am not certain that was the basis of it. I have lived long enough to be a little skeptical of the rationalizations of some of my brethren. And I have learned that attitudes, temperaments

and dispositions have a lot to do with family problems. When men have the will to divide they will find something to justify their doing so.

In any event, here we are, shamefully strife-torn and factional, going our separate ways and seeking to perpetuate our parties both pro and con, and quoting scripture to prove we are loyal to Christ while disregarding his prayer for our oneness. The brethren who make use of the instrument a test of union and communion, have apparently resolved upon an adamant stance based upon what they are pleased to call "the authority of silence."

This is the chosen battleground. Here the civil war must continue until one side or the other surrenders or both are hammered into oblivion. This is the cutting edge of the current debate and the family tie will again be whacked in two every time it appears that the breach is being healed. Brother Reuel Lemmons writes in *Firm Foundation,* "We believe a valid argument can be made on the authority of God in areas of silence. And the Holy Spirit thought so, too."

Our brother contends that we should maintain the wall and perpetuate the barrier between those saints who use the instrument and those whose consciences will not allow them to do it. With him there can be no overt demonstration of the fellowship which we share in Jesus until all of the brethren see the matter of the instrument as he does. This is the position generally of a great host of brethren in the anti-instrument segment of the brotherhood.

I deny this. It is unscriptural and divisive. It will never produce unity in Christ Jesus but will foment hate and hostility. It is a fruit of legalism and results from a warped view of priorities and a mixed-up sense of values. It exalts opinion above the cross and makes our reconciliation less important than our personal, and often faulty judgment about things.

I have examined the validity of the argument related to "areas of silence" and I do not think that it can ever be made weighty enough to justify hacking the family of God to bloody bits and practicing the spiritual cannibalism involved in biting and devouring one another. The Holy Spirit said nothing about the authority of God in areas of silence, although our brother says the Spirit thought it. It is a sectarian game to think a thing and then try to make it appear that the Spirit thinks the same way.

The "valid argument" is quite simple. The Holy Spirit said sing. He did not say to play. Therefore, the latter is forbidden. It is immediately assumed that anyone who employs an instrument in conjunction with praise rendered to God thereby despises the authority of that same God. He is a rebel, a deliberate violator of heaven's will. Granting the premises of the brethren who project the argument one might come up with such a simplistic conclusion. But other brethren insist on doing their own thinking. And that is the real root of the difficulty. All would be well if everyone would agree that there are infallible interpreters and allow them to call all of the shots.

Some brethren feel there are extenuating circumstances. It is neither as black in one area nor as white in another as some would make it appear. They think Brother Lemmons overlooks some factors while looking over some scriptures to make his case. And they think that case is not as air-tight as Brother Lemmons tries to make it appear. I shall not recount their arguments. We have been exposed to the see-sawing back and forth for almost a century of sometimes ruthless debate, and nothing new has been added in these latter days.

I think that all of the brethren respect the authority of Christ. I do not know any who are deliberately flaunting heaven's decrees or spitting in God's face. Many of them do not accept the authority of *Firm Foundation* as equal with that of the Bible. They are anxious to recognize God's revelation but are not so overwhelmed by Brother Lemmons' explanation. I mention our brother in this connection because he has been in the fore-front of arranging confrontations which so far have been spent in reviewing and rehearsing the hoary debaters' arguments based on "hamburger on the Lord's table," and the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu. Neither of these has any logical connection with the point at issue, but they are someone's brain children and everyone is proud of his intellectual progeny.

What about the "last ditch stand" on the authority of silence? Is it as devastating as we have always implied? Is it an atomic bomb that just must be dropped in the family circle to break up a happy home and blow us into gory bits? I doubt it! I once used it with all of the oratorical force at my command. I inveighed against brethren who were too imbecilic to acknowledge the force of my superior reasoning, branding them as traitors and apostates, men who would rather have their own stubborn way than to show deference for and honor to the King of kings.

I think that, with most of us, the authority is not in the area of silence at all, but in what we read into it. God may have been silent but we have not been. We fill in the blanks for heaven and then assume that what we have filled in is as important as what God said on either side of the blank. God did not tell me to break up the family because some of the children did not come up with the same answer for the blank spaces as we did. We assumed that frightful prerogative for ourselves. When we did we started playing God.

I haven't the slightest idea what God will say at the judgment to my brethren who conscientiously think they can employ an instrument as an aid to their praise. I do not know if he will damn them all, or save them "without the loss of one." If he loves his sons and daughters more than he dislikes a piano he may forgive them. Of course, there is a possibility that he will not make a big ruckus about it one way or another. He may just *remain silent* about it.

I will be surprised, when we are "judged out of the things that are written in the books," if God quotes some of the scriptures we have quoted, and uses some of the syllogisms we have drummed up. That is the trouble with "areas of silence." There is too

much silence in them. And we have to do too much deducing and speculating. Our brethren really need to do a thesis on "The Authority of God in Areas of Speculation," for that is exactly what they mean, although they will vociferously deny it!

Who really knows that the silence of God in a given area denotes condemnation? If a father says to his children, "Eat with your fork," does that necessarily imply that it would disregard his authority to also use a spoon? Should such a family divide into a spoon and anti-spoon faction and refuse to eat at the same table, or join in painting the house until the spoon-users confessed their wrong and got rid of their spoons?

Did it ever occur to anyone that God might not have mentioned instrumental music because it just isn't that important to heaven? And that goes for a lot of other things which some of us do and others conscientiously oppose. A lot of things may not carry the weight in heaven among the angels that they do on earth. We do not *know* why God was silent about a lot of things. Until we do know we simply cannot predicate *authority* on his silence as if we did know.

All any of us can do in areas of silence is to be honest in our own personal convictions and scruples. We cannot bind our deductions and opinions upon others. We must be as true as possible to our consciences and we must allow others the same rights and liberties. God will fill in the blanks some day and then we will all know.

One thing that always comes up at this juncture is the question of safety. Some good brother will ask, "But isn't it safer not to use instrumental music since God was silent about it?" That argument sounds good but I never knew any person who made it to be consistent. He is anxious to be *safe* only when someone else has something that he opposes. One thing I do know and that is this. It is not as "unsafe" to take a chance on something God has not mentioned as to "set at nought a brother." He has mentioned that, you know.

I am going to receive my brethren, whether they use instrumental music or do not use it. I am not going to speak where God is silent. You cannot obey silence, you can only respect it. When you talk about obeying silence you have reference to what you have read into it. You cannot bind upon others what you think that God meant in areas where he did not speak. I do not know what the Father will do to those who use instrumental music. He did not say. But I know what he will do with me if I do not welcome and love the brethren. I do not have to depend upon the silence of the scriptures for that. The Book is full of it!

We should never have divided over instrumental music in the first place. It was a sin to do so. And we should not remain divided over it, or our other silly hangups now! I refuse to help perpetuate a senseless feud. I am non-instrumental by persuasion, conviction and choice, but I am not anti-brotherhood by any means.

Let us heal the wounds in the body. Let us repair the breaches. Let us answer the prayer of Jesus in our generation! Let us be one in Christ now! It is time to stop arguing with one another and start living in him. Put up the hatchet! Take the axe back to the woodshed! Get rid of the tomahawk. We are not alien tribes. We are the family of God. Let's substitute the open hand for the clenched fist. We have no right to expect our children to accomplish what we are unwilling to undertake. Let us dare to be one in spite of our differences! That is the real challenge! —139 *Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121*

No one's life can be happy unless beyond the superficial attainments of the external life the deeper springs of character are touched and find a normal outlet.—*Lin Yutang*

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LET'S GIVE UP OUR "SCRIPTURAL" PARTY NAMES

A. V. MANSUR

The most commonly used term for the body of Christ in the scriptures is simply *the church.* But God's true church is by no means restricted to any certain term, for it embraces all appropriate terms which properly refer to the body of Christ. Many of these terms are freely used by various groups of Christians, the question being whether they are appropriately used or exploited for sectarian purposes.

A party name, whether drawn from the Bible or not, does not identify a group as His church, even when that name makes direct reference to Christ or God. When such a name is used exclusively it only shows the sectarian character of the group that uses it. Even when it is a scriptural term it is still used in a sectarian way when it is made to exclude all other Christians except those appropriating it. There are many scriptural terms that are unscripturally used. All such names as *Disciples of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses*, *Church of God, Church of Christ, Christian Church* are sectarian names even though they are scripturally based, for they are used to refer to a particular party and not to all of God's people.

The church belongs to Jesus. He bought it with a price—and what a price! It wasn't any twentieth century *Church of Christ,* which became a separate party with its own peculiar name somewhere around 1906. John the Baptist was the first baptizer, but he did not start the Baptist Church. So it is with all parties that seek to draw upon some part of scripture as a means of special recognition or to distinguish themselves from others. To speak simply of *the church* is enough. We need no more.

The term *the church* is used in scriptures the way we use “the Sun” or “the Moon.” There are many suns in the heavens, but when we say “the Sun” it is clear what we mean. It could be called “the glorious Sun” or “the bright Sun,” but these are not its name. It is still just *the Sun.* Likewise there are many different so-called churches, called by many different names, but Christ’s true church is still simply *the church.* But whenever the term *church* is applied to only a portion of God’s people it is being sectarianized, whether or not it is coupled with the names of Christ or God.

If we would all drop the use of special party names, it would be the biggest step ever taken toward restoring the unity of the brotherhood. None of us will make any real contribution toward the unity of God’s people so long as we continue to use party names. No matter how “scriptural” we think our party name is, we are not likely to be blessed of God so long as we are content to separate ourselves from other believers by our own pet terminology.

Once we drop our party names, whether taken from the Bible or not, and we are asked “What denomination are you?,” we would have the rare opportunity of telling them honestly that we are no denomination. We might, of course, have other sectarian practices, but insofar as names are concerned we would truly be free of this sectarian peculiarity.

When the church is referred to in the scriptures it is always both inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive in that it includes all Christians; exclusive in that it excludes all others. We cannot use any church name in such a way as to include some Christians and exclude others.

Actually these names that are so coveted by some of us were never used in the Bible with any idea of *naming* the church. They were simply descriptive terms used to emphasize certain characteristics of the church.

It is time for all true Christians to come out and take their stand, and let their light be seen by all the world. No doubt many will continue to resist these simple truths and go on insisting on their sectarian names, but this does not excuse us for continuing to propagate the party spirit and promote division among our brothers in Christ.—*Rt. 3, Galt, California*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Pat Boone's New Song

Pat Boone's "New Song" stirs my curiosity. I have long been dissatisfied with our attempts to bury the Holy Spirit on the Isle of Patmos along with the apostle John.—*Massachusetts*

Let My People Go!

I appreciate your stand on opinion and doctrine, on instrumental music, and on Pat Boone and his experience in the Holy Spirit. I still have much study to do on these and other subjects, but until I do, I want to love all of my brethren as much as I can. Already I am beginning to see that I don't have to agree with you on every little jot and tittle before I can love you.—*Abilene*

We praise the Lord for your paper and especially for the latest issue containing Pat Boone's story. But the first article on "The New Covenant" needs to be spread abroad. Our elders and preachers, as well as all the rest of us, need to read and understand what you are saying.—*California*

If you cannot send us extra copies of Pat Boone's "My Search for Dynamic Reality" we would like to secure permission to reprint it.—*New Mexico*

Your articles in the *Restoration Review* are tremendous. Praise God! I am so glad that God is not leaving out the people in the Church of Christ in His outpouring of the Holy Spirit at this crucial time! We need Jesus so badly!—*California*

Please accept my appreciation and thanksgiving for your splendid little paper. It puts emphasis where I believe it is most needed: on true Christian love and the much neglected great Holy Spirit. However fine may be our rhetoric, or however meticulous our doctrinal details, we are still nothing without the absolute of love. May God bless and further your noble and needed work of reconciliation. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Matt. 5:9.—*Ohio*

I have borrowed and read the May issue in which Pat Boone's article "My Search for Dynamic Reality" appeared. I have some friends who do not believe that Pat really has experienced the talking in tongues, and I'd like some copies to give some of them. Pat Boone baptized our oldest daughter, and she has converted her husband to the "one way." She can't believe that Pat is sincere in what he now feels.—*Tennessee*

Brother Pat's article is a beautiful testimony to his courage and love. I pray only that our brethren will see this love and share it rather than stumble over something with which they may disagree.—*Chicago*

I am really thrilled with your attitude, your willingness to give the other guy the benefit of the doubt (as Christ gave us the benefit of the certainty!), and your "open-arm" approach to fellowship... More and more I have the feeling that the Lord is trying to

dissolve the barriers between people and bring us together in "the unity of the Spirit."—*Pat Boone*

Preaching at the Vatican

An interesting news item tells of how one of our Church of Christ ministers in Rome stood up one day and preached in the Vatican. This was not at a public service as such, but to the crowd milling about in the vast expanses of St. Peter's cathedral, many of them no doubt tourists. The reporter to the *Firm Foundation* tells us that the sermon was longer than Paul's address on Mars Hill and that it was "the pure simple truth." It also condemned some of the errors of Romanism, all the way from its gross claims about Mary to its bachelor bishops. The pope was also identified as the man of sin in 2 Thess. 2.

The reactions to this unusual incident are interesting. An American tourist, apparently a non-Roman Catholic, chided the preacher for his behavior, asking him if he had permission to do such a thing. "How would you like a priest coming into your place of worship to preach against *your* religion?," asked the tourist.

A Baptist in the crowd approached the preacher, commending him for his courage and offering a donation.

Most noteworthy about the report was the absence of any reaction on the part of the officials or Vatican police. There was apparently no reaction from any Roman Catholic source. Did they allow the man to have his say, and to walk out unmolested? Was it that they simply did not care or paid no attention? It must have caused not even a ripple in the spacious chambers of St. Peter's.

But what the Vatican ignored was to the preacher no doubt significant. He was once "a shy, reserved and timid soul," the report reveals, but now his reputation for boldness is assured and he has made the columns of the *Firm Foundation.* And he can tell his grandchildren that he once preached in St. Peter's.

Socrates would insist that unless there is also wisdom there can be no real courage. However I would take no honor from our brother, especially since I've pulled a few tricks like that myself; and it could well have taken something most of us do not have to get up in St. Peter's and speak "the pure simple truth." But how disconcerting it must be to be ignored. When I did things like that, they threw rocks at me and hauled me off to jail.

As I read this report I asked myself how it would look to a gracious, intelligent Roman Catholic leader. He would probably understand the conduct of the young preacher well enough, allowing that religious zeal sometimes takes this form. He would grant the sincerity of the man and perhaps insist that he should be allowed to have his say, even in St. Peter's, so long as he does not become a nuisance. But I think he would be puzzled over the fact that the report would be published in our church press. If they would ignore

it, why couldn't we? What is so significant about it as to merit a full page write-up in a weekly organ?

And if our Roman Catholic friend were as gracious as many are he would be more critical of one of his own priests who would do something like that in the rotund corridors of Moody Coliseum during an ACC lectureship.

And of course our reaction would be the same as theirs was in Rome. We would pay no attention to him at all!

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